



Lenny J. Bullo.

M^{rs} MERRY as HORATIA.

My dear pledge, design'd for happier hours.

London, Printed for J. Bell, British Library, Strand, Oct. 20 1792.

THE ROMAN FATHER.

A

TRAGEDY,

ALTERED FROM MR. W. WHITEHEAD.

ADAPTED FOR

THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,

AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRES-ROYAL,

DRURY-LANE AND COVENT-GARDEN.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOKS,

By Permission of the Managers.

"The Lines distinguished by inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation."

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MDCCXCII.

THE ROMAN FATHER

THADDEUS

AND FROM HIS WIFE HELEN

AND HIS DAUGHTER

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MR. WHITEHEAD does not disguise his obligations to CORNEILLE ; and there are who think it would have been better if they had been even yet more considerable.

But WHITEHEAD was wedded to classic models, and he thought the complexity of the French Intrigue would violate the unity of his subject. The tragedy of CORNEILLE has therefore the most business—yet its scenes are cold and declamatory, and WHITEHEAD, who saw this, could not keep the chill invasion from his own Scenes.

When HENDERSON, as it were shewing a lightning before death, threw into one exclamation in the character of HORATIUS, the true tragic tone of nature and passion, he reached the perfection of the art—For the opportunity he rather made it, than found it. When VALERIA demands.—

What could he do, my lord, when three opposed him? the Actor collected himself, and with an energy of voice and action, that struck the heart like the thunderbolt, piercingly exclaimed, DIE!

The tone vibrates still upon our ear, it was never surpassed, not even by the shriek of Mrs. CRAWFORD's "Was he alive?" Both electrified.

PROLOGUE.

*BRITONS, to-night, in native pomp we come,
True heroes all, from virtuous ancient Rome ;
In those far distant times, when Romans knew
The sweets of guarded liberty, like you ;
And, safe from ills which force or faction brings,
Saw freedom reign beneath the smile of kings.*

*Yet from such times, and such plain chiefs as these,
What can we frame a polish'd age to please ?
Say, can you listen to the artless woes
Of an old tale, which every school-boy knows ?
Where to your hearts alone the scenes apply ;
No merit theirs but pure simplicity.*

*Our bard has play'd a most adventurous part,
And turn'd upon himself the critic's art :
Stripp'd each luxuriant plume from Fancy's wings,
And torn up similies from vulgar things :
Nay, ev'n each moral, sentimental stroke,
Where not the character but poet spoke,
He lopp'd as foreign to his chaste design ;
Nor spar'd an useless, tho' a golden line.*

*These are his arts ; if these cannot atone
For all those nameless errors yet unknown,*

If, shunning faults which nobler bards commit,
He wants the force to strike th' attentive pit,
Be just, and tell him so; he asks advice,
Willing to learn, and would not ask it twice.
Your kind applause may bid him write—beware!
Or kinder censure teach him to forbear.

Dramatis Personae.

COVENT-GARDEN.

Men.

TULLUS HOSTILIUS, <i>King of Rome,</i>	-	-	Mr. Aickin.
HORATIUS, <i>a Roman Senator,</i>	-	-	Mr. Farren.
PUBLIUS HORATIUS, <i>his Son,</i>	-	-	Mr. Pope.
VALERIUS, <i>a young Patrician,</i>	-	-	Mr. Davies.

Women.

HORATIA, <i>daughter to Horatius,</i>	-	-	Mrs. Merry.
VALERIA, <i>sister to Valerius,</i>	-	-	Mrs. Bernard.

Citizens, Guards, and Attendants.

SCENE, *Rome.*



THE ROMAN FATHER.

ACT I. SCENE I.

*A Room in HORATIUS'S House A Soldier crosses the
Stage, HORATIA following.*

Horatia.

STAY, soldier. As you parted from my father,
Something I overheard of near concern,
But all imperfectly. Said you not Alba
Was on the brink of fate, and Rome determin'd
This day to crush her haughty rival's power,
Or perish in th' attempt?

Sold. 'Twas so resolv'd
This morning, lady, ere I left the camp.
Our heroes are tir'd out with ling'ring war,
And half-unmeaning fight.

Horatia. "Alas! I hop'd
"The kind remorse which touch'd the kindred states,
"And made their swords fall lightly on the breasts
"Of foes they could not hate, might have produc'd
"A milder resolution." Then this day

B ij

Is fix'd for death or conquest? [*He bows.*] To me death,
Whoever conquers! [*Aside.*] I detain you, sir.
Commend me to my brothers; say, I wish——
But wherefore should I wish? The gods will crown
Their virtues with the just success they merit——
Yet let me ask you, sir——

Sold. My duty, lady,
Commands me hence. Ere this they have engag'd;
And conquest's self would lose its charms to me,
Should I not share the danger.

*As the Soldier goes out, VALERIA enters, who looks first
on him, and then on HORATIA.*

Valeria. My dear Horatia, wherefore wilt thou
court

The means to be unhappy? Still enquiring,
Still more to be undone. I heard it too;
And flew to find thee, ere the fatal news
Had hurt thy quiet, that thou might'st have learnt it
From a friend's tongue, and dress'd in gentler terms.

Horatia. Oh, I am lost, Valeria! lost to virtue.
Ev'n while my country's fate, the fate of Rome,
Hangs on the conqueror's sword, this breast can feel
A softer passion, and divide its cares.
Alba to me is Rome. Wouldst thou believe it?
I would have sent, by him thou saw'st departing,
Kind wishes to my brothers; but my tongue
Denied its office, and this rebel heart
Ev'n dreaded their success. Oh, Curiatius!
Why art thou there, or why an enemy?

Valeria. Forbear this self-reproach; he is thy husband,

And who can blame thy fears? If fortune make him
A while thy country's foe, she cannot cancel
Vows register'd above. What tho' the priest
Had not confirm'd it at the sacred altar;
Yet were your hearts united, and that union
Approv'd by each consenting parent's choice.
Your brothers lov'd him as a friend, a brother;
And all the ties of kindred pleaded for him,
And still must plead, whate'er our heroes teach us,
Of patriot-strength. Our country may demand
We should be wretched, and we must obey;
But never can require us not to feel
That we are miserable: nature there
Will give the lie to virtue.

Horatia. True; yet sure
A Roman virgin should be more than woman.
Are we not early taught to mock at pain,
And look on danger with undaunted eyes?
But what are dangers, what the ghastliest form
Of death itself?—Oh, were I only bid
To rush into the Tiber's foaming wave,
“Swol'n with uncommon floods,” or from the height
Of yon Tarpeian rock, whose giddy steep
Has turn'd me pale with horror at the sight,
I'd think the task were nothing! but to bear
These strange vicissitudes of tort'ring pain,
To fear, to doubt, and to despair as I do——

Valeria. And why despair? Have we so idly learn'd

The noblest lessons of our infant days,
Our trust above? Does there not still remain
The wretch's last retreat, the gods, Horatia?
'Tis from their awful wills our evils spring,
And at their altars may we find relief.
Say, shall we thither?—Look not thus dejected,
But answer me. A confidence in them,
Ev'n in this crisis of our fate, will calm
Thy troubled soul, and fill thy breast with hope.

Horatia. Talk not of hope; “the wretch on yonder
plain,

“Who hears the victor's threats, and sees his sword
“Impending o'er him, feels no surer fate,
“Tho' less delay'd than mine.” What should I
hope?

That Alba conquer?—Curs'd be every thought
Which looks that way! “The shrieks of captive
“matrons

“Sound in my ears!”

Valeria. Forbear, forbear, Horatia;
Nor fright me with the thought, Rome cannot fall.
Think on the glorious battles she has fought;
Has she once fail'd, though oft expos'd to danger;
And has not her immortal founder promis'd
That she should rise the mistress of the world?

Horatia. And if Rome conquers, then Horatia dies.

Valeria. Why wilt thou form vain images of horror,
Industrious to be wretched? Is it then
Become impossible that Rome should triumph,
And Curiatius live? He must, he shall;

Protecting gods shall spread their shields around him,
And love shall combat in Horatia's cause.

Horatia. Think'st thou so meanly of him?—No,
Valeria,

His soul's too great to give me such a trial;
Or could it ever come, I think, myself,
Thus lost in love, thus abject as I am,
I should despise the slave who dar'd survive
His country's ruin. Ye immortal powers!
I love his fame too well, his spotless honour,
At least I hope I do, to wish him mine
On any terms which he must blush to own.

Horatius. [*Without.*] What ho! Vindicus.

Horatia. What means that shout?—" Might we
" not ask, Valeria?"

Didst thou not wish me to the temple?—Come,
I will attend thee thither; the kind gods
Perhaps may ease this throbbing heart, and spread
At least a temporary calm within.

Valeria. Alas, Horatia, 'tis not to the temple
That thou wouldst fly; the shout alone alarms thee.
But do not thus anticipate thy fate;

Why shouldst thou learn each chance of varying
war,

" Which takes a thousand turns, and shifts the scene
" From bad to good, as fortune smiles or frowns?"

Stay but an hour perhaps, and thou shalt know
The whole at once.—I'll send—I'll fly myself
To ease thy doubts, and bring thee news of joy.

Horatia. Again, and nearer too—I must attend thee.

Valeria. Hark! 'tis thy father's voice, he comes to cheer thee.

Enter Horatius, and Valerius.

Horatius. [*Entering.*] News from the camp, my child!

Save you, sweet maid! [*Seeing Valeria.*

Your brother brings the tidings, for, alas!

I am no warrior now; my useless age,

Far from the paths of honour loiters here

In sluggish inactivity at home.

Yet I remember——

Horatia. You'll forgive us, sir,
If with impatience we expect the tidings.

Horatius. I had forgot; the thoughts of what I was
Engross'd my whole attention.—Pray, young soldier,
Relate it for me; you beheld the scene,
And can report it justly.

Valerius. Gentle lady,
The scene was piteous, though its end be peace.

Horatia. Peace? O, my fluttering heart! by what
kind means?

Valerius. 'Twere tedious, lady, and unnecessary
To paint the disposition of the field;
Suffice it, we were arm'd, and front to front
The adverse legions heard the trumpet's sound:
But vain was the alarm, for motionless,
And wrapt in thought they stood; the kindred ranks
Had caught each other's eyes, nor dar'd to lift
The fault'ring spear against the breast they lov'd.

Again th' alarm was given, and now they seem'd
Preparing to engage, when once again
They hung their drooping heads, and inward mourn'd;
Then nearer drew, and at the third alarm,
Casting their swords and useless shields aside,
Rush'd to each other's arms.

Horatius. 'Twas so, just so,
(Tho' I was then a child, yet I have heard
My mother weeping oft relate the story)
Soft pity touch'd the breasts of mighty chiefs,
Romans and Sabines, when the matrons rush'd
Between their meeting armies, and oppos'd
Their helpless infants, and their heaving breasts
To their advancing swords, and bade them there
Sheath all their vengeance.—But I interrupt you—
Proceed, Valerius, they would hear th' event.
—And yet, methinks, the Albans—pray go on.

Valerius. Our King Hostilius from a rising mound
Beheld the tender interview, and join'd
His friendly tears with theirs; then swift advanc'd,
Ev'n to the thickest press, and cried, My friends,
If thus we love, why are we enemies?
Shall stern ambition, rivalry of power,
Subdue the soft humanity within us?
Are we not join'd by every tie of kindred?
And can we find no method to compose
These jars of honour, these nice principles
Of virtue, which infest the noblest mind?

Horatius. There spoke his country's father! this
transcends

The flight of earth-born kings, whose low ambition
But tends to lay the face of nature waste,
And blast creation!—How was it receiv'd?

Valerius. As he himself could wish, with eager
transport.

In short, the Roman and the Alban chiefs
In council have determin'd, that since glory
Must have her victims, and each rival state,
Aspiring to dominion, scorns to yield,
From either army shall be chose three champions
To fight the cause alone, and whate'er state
Shall prove superior, there acknowledg'd power
Shall fix th' imperial seat, and both unite
Beneath one common head.

Horatia. Kind Heaven, I thank thee!
Bless'd be the friendly grief that touch'd their souls!
“Bless'd be Hostilius for the generous counsel!
“Bless'd be the meeting chiefs!” and bless'd the tongue,
Which brings the gentle tidings!

Valeria. Now, Horatia,
Your idle fears are o'er.

Horatia. Yet one remains.
Who are the champions? Are they yet elected?
Has Rome——

Valerius. The Roman chiefs now meet in council,
And ask the presence of the sage Horatius.

Horatius. [After having seem'd some time in thought.]

But still, methinks, I like not this, to trust
The Roman cause to such a slender hazard—
Three combatants!——'tis dangerous——

Horatia. [In a fright.] My father!

Horatius. I might, perhaps, prevent it——

Horatia. Do not, sir,
Oppose the kind decree.

Valerius. Rest satisfied
Sweet lady, 'tis so solemnly agreed to,
Not even Horatius's advice can shake it.

Horatius. And yet 'twere well to end these civil
broils :

The neighb'ring states might take advantage of them.
—Would I were young again! How glorious
Were death in such a cause!—And yet, who knows
Some of my boys may be selected for it——
Perhaps may conquer——Grant me that, kind gods,
And close my eyes in transport!—Come, Valerius,
I'll but dispatch some necessary orders,
And strait attend thee.—Daughter, if thou lov'st
Thy brothers, let thy prayers be pour'd to Heav'n,
That one at least may share the glorious task. [Exit.

Valerius. Rome cannot trust her cause to worthier
hands.

They bade me greet you, Lady. [To Horatia.

“ Well, Valeria,

“ This is your home, I find: your lovely friend,

“ And you, I doubt not, have indulg'd strange fears,

“ And run o'er all the horrid scenes of war,

“ *Valeria.* Though we are women, brother, we are
Romans,

“ Not to be scar'd with shadows, though not proof

“ 'Gainst all alarms, when real danger threatens.”

Horatia. [*With some hesitation.*] My brothers, gentle sir, you said were well.

Saw you their noble friends, the Curiatii?

The truce, perhaps, permitted it.

Valerius. Yes, Lady,

I left them jocund in your brothers' tent,

Like friends, whom envious storms awhile had parted,

Joying to meet again.

Horatia. Sent they no message?

Valerius. None, fair-one, but such general salutation

As friends would bring unbid.

Horatia. Said Caius nothing?

Valerius. Caius?

Horatia. Ay, Caius; did he mention me?

Valerius. 'Twas slightly, if he did, and 'scapes me now——

O yes, I do remember, when your brother
Ask'd him, in jest, if he had ought to send,
“A sigh's soft waftage, or the tender token
“Of tresses breeding to fantastic forms,”

To sooth a love-sick maid (your pardon, lady)

He smil'd, and cry'd, Glory's the soldier's mistress.

Horatia. Sir, you'll excuse me—something of importance——

My father may have business——Oh, Valeria!

[*Aside to Valeria.*

Talk to thy brother, know the fatal truth

I dread to hear, and let me learn to die,

If Curiatius has indeed forgot me.

[*Exit,*

Valerius. She seems disorder'd !

Valeria. Has she not cause ?

Can you administer the baneful potion,
And wonder at th' effect ?

Valerius. You talk in riddles !

Valeria. They're riddles, brother, which your
heart unfolds,

Though you affect surprise. Was Curiatius
Indeed so cold ? Poor shallow artifice,

The trick of hopeless love ! I saw it plainly.

Yet what could you propose ? An hour's uneasiness
To poor Horatia ; for be sure by that time

She sees him, and your deep-wrought schemes are air.

Valerius. What could I do ? this peace has ruin'd
me ;

While war continued, I had gleams of hope ;

Some lucky chance might rid me of my rival,

And time efface his image in her breast.

But me——

Valeria. Yes, now you must resolve to follow
Th' advice I gave you first, and root this passion

Entirely from your heart ; for know, she dotes,

Ev'n to distraction dotes on Curiatius ;

And every fear she felt, while danger threaten'd,

Will now endear him more.

Valerius. Cruel Valeria,

You triumph in my pain !

Valeria. By Heaven, I do not ;

I only would extirpate every thought

Which gives you pain, nor leave one foolish wish

For hope to dally with. “ When friends are mad,
“ ’Tis most unkind to humour their distraction ;
“ Harsh means are necessary.

“ *Valerius*. Yet we first
“ Should try the gentler.

“ *Valeria*. Did I not ? Ye powers !
“ Did I not sooth your griefs, indulge your fondness,
“ While the least prospect of success remain’d ?
“ Did I not press you still to urge your suit,
“ Intreat you daily to declare your passion,
“ Seek out unnumber’d opportunities,
“ And lay the follies of my sex before you ;
“ *Valerius*. Alas ! thou know’st, Valeria, woman’s
“ heart

“ Was never won by tales of bleeding love :
“ ’Tis by degrees the sly enchanter works
“ Assuming friendship’s name, and fits the soul
“ For soft impressions, ere the fault’ring tongue,
“ And guilty-blushing cheek, with many a glance
“ Shot inadvertent, tells the secret flame.

“ *Valeria*. True, these are arts for those that love
at leisure ;

“ You had no time for tedious stratagem ;
“ A dang’rous rival press’d, and has succeeded.”

Valerius. I own my error—yet once more assist me—
Nay, turn not from me, by my soul I meant not
To interrupt their loves.—Yet, should some accident,
’Tis not impossible, divide their hearts,
I might, perhaps, have hope : therefore ’till marriage
Cuts off all commerce, and confirms me wretched,

Be it thy task, my sister, with fond stories,
Such as our ties of blood may countenance,
To paint thy brother's worth, his power in arms,
His favour with the king, "but most of all,
"That certain tenderness of soul which steals
"All women's hearts," then mention many a fair,
No matter whom, that sighs to call you sister.

Valeria. Well, well, away—Yet tell me, ere you go,
How did this lover talk of his Horatia?

Valerius. Why will you mention that ungrateful
subject?

Think what you've heard me breathe a thousand times
When my whole soul dissolv'd in tenderness;
'Twas rapture all; what lovers only feel,
Or can express when felt. He had been here,
But sudden orders from the camp detain'd him.
Farewell, Horatius waits me—but remember,
My life, nay, more than life, depends on you. [*Exit.*

Valeria. Poor youth! he knows not how I feel his
anguish,

Yet dare not seem to pity what I feel.
How shall I act betwixt this friend and brother?
Should she suspect his passion, she may doubt
My friendship too; and yet to tell it her
Were to betray his cause. No, let my heart
With the same blameless caution still proceed;
To each inclining most as most distress;
Be just to both, and leave to Heav'n the rest! [*Exit.*

ACT II. SCENE I.

Continues. Enter HORATIA and VALERIA:

Horatia.

ALAS, "how easily do we admit
"The thing we wish were true! yet sure," Valeria,
This seeming negligence of Curiatius
Betrays a secret coldness at the heart.
May not long absence, or the charms of war,
Have damp'd, at least, if not effac'd his passion?
I know not what to think.

Valeria. Think, my Horatia,
That you're a lover, and have learn'd the art
To raise vain scruples, and torment yourself
With every distant hint of fancied ill.
Your Curiatius still remains the same.
My brother idly trifled with your passion,
Or might, perhaps, unheedingly relate
What you too nearly feel. But see, your father.

Horatia. He seems transported; sure some happy
news
Has brought him back thus early. Oh, my heart!
I long, yet dread to ask him. Speak, Valeria.

Enter HORATIUS.

Valeria. You're soon return'd, my lord.

Horatius. Return'd, Valeria!

My life, my youth's return'd, I tread in air!

—I cannot speak ; my joy's too great for utterance.

—Oh, I could weep !—my sons, my sons are chosen
Their country's combatants ; not one, but all !

Horatia. My brothers, said you, sir ?

Horatius. All three, my child,
All three are champions in the cause of Rome.
Oh, happy state of fathers ! thus to feel
New warmth revive, and springing life renew'd
Even on the margin of the grave !

Valeria. The time
Of combat, is it fix'd ?

Horatius. This day, this hour
Perhaps decides our doom.

Valeria. And is it known
With whom they must engage ?

Horatius. Not yet, Valeria ;
But with impatience we expect each moment
The resolutions of the Alban senate.
And soon may they arrive, that ere we quit
Yon hostile field, the chiefs who dar'd oppose
Rome's rising glories, may with shame confess
The gods protect the empire they have rais'd.
Where are thy smiles, Horatia ? Whence proceeds
This sullen silence, when my thronging joys
Want words to speak them ? Pr'ythee, talk of empire,
Talk of those darlings of my soul, thy brothers.
Call them whate'er wild fancy can suggest,
Their country's pride, the boast of future times,
The dear defence, the guardian gods of Rome !—

By Heaven, thou stand'st unmov'd, nor feels thy
breast

The charms of glory, the extatic warmth
Which beams new life, and lifts us nearer Heaven!

Horatia. My gracious father, with surprise and
transport

I heard the tidings, as becomes your daughter.
And like your daughter, were our sex allow'd
The noble privilege which man usurps,
Could die with pleasure in my country's cause.
But yet, permit a sister's weakness, sir,
To feel the pangs of nature, and to dread
The fate of those she loves, however glorious.
And sure they cannot all survive a conflict
So desperate as this.

Horatius. Survive! By Heaven,
I could not hope that they should all survive.
No; let them fall. If from their glorious deaths
Rome's freedom spring, I shall be nobly paid
For every sharpest pang the parent feels.
Had I a thousand sons, in such a cause
I could behold them bleeding at my feet,
And thank the gods with tears!

Enter PUBLIUS HORATIUS.

Pub. My father!

[Offering to kneel.]

Horatius. Hence!

Kneel not to me—stand off; and let me view
At distance, and with reverential awe,
The champion of my country!—Oh, my boy!

That I should live to this—my soul's too full ;
Let this and this speak for me.—Bless thee, bless
thee ! *[Embracing him.]*

But wherefore art thou absent from the camp ?
Where are thy brothers ? Has the Alban state
Determin'd ? Is the time of combat fix'd ?

Pub. Think not, my lord, that filial reverence,
However due, had drawn me from the field,
Where nobler duty calls ; a patriot's soul
Can feel no humbler ties, nor knows the voice
Of kindred, when his country claims his aid.
It was the king's command I should attend you,
Else had I staid 'till wreaths immortal grac'd
My brows, and made thee proud indeed to see
Beneath thy roof, and bending for thy blessing,
Not thine, Horatius, but the son of Rome !

Horatius. Oh, virtuous pride !—'tis bliss too ex-
quisite

For human sense !—thus, let me answer thee.

[Embracing him again.]

Where are my other boys ?

Pub. They only wait
'Till Alba's loit'ring chiefs declare her champions,
Our future victims, sir, and with the news
Will greet their father's ear.

Horatius. It shall not need,
Myself will to the field. Come, let us haste,
My old blood boils, and my tumultuous spirits
Pant for the onset. O, for one short hour
Of vigorous youth, that I might share the toil

Now with my boys, and be the next my last!

Horatia. My brother!

Pub. My Horatia! ere the dews
Of evening fall, thou shalt with transport own me;
Shalt hold thy country's saviour in thy arms,
Or bathe his honest bier with tears of joy.
Thy lover greets thee, and complains of absence
With many a sigh, and many a longing look
Sent tow'rd the towers of Rome.

Horatia. Methinks, a lover
Might take th' advantage of the truce, and bear
His kind complaints himself, not trust his vows
To other tongues, or be oblig'd to tell
The passing winds his passion.

Pub. Dearest sister,
He with impatience waits the lucky moment
That may with honour bear him to your arms.
Didst thou but hear how tenderly he talks,
How blames the dull delay of Alban councils,
And chides the ling'ring minutes as they pass,
'Till fate determines, and the tedious chiefs
Permit his absence, thou wouldst pity him.
But soon, my sister, soon shall every bar
Which thwarts thy happiness be far away.
We are no longer enemies to Alba,
This day unites us, and to-morrow's sun
May hear thy vows, and make my friend my brother.

Horatius. [*Having talked apart with Valeria.* 'Tis
truly Roman.—Here's a maid, Horatia,
Laments her brother lost the glorious proof

Of dying for his country.—Come, my son,
Her softness will infect thee; pr'ythee, leave her.

Horatia. [*Looking first on her father, and then tenderly
on her brother.*] Not 'till my soul has pour'd
its wishes for him.

Hear me, dread god of war, protect and save him!

[*Kneeling.*

For thee, and thy immortal Rome, he fights!
Dash the proud spear from every hostile hand
That dare oppose him; may each Alban chief
Fly from his presence, or his vengeance feel!
And when in triumph he returns to Rome, [*Rising.*
Hail him, ye maids, with grateful songs of praise,
And scatter all the blooming spring before him;
Curs'd be the envious brow that smiles not then,
Curs'd be the wretch that wears one mark of sorrow,
Or flies not thus with open arms to greet him.

Enter TULLUS HOSTILIUS, VALERIUS, and Guards.

Valerius. The king, my lord, approaches.

Horatius. Gracious sir,
Whence comes this condescension?

Tullus. Good old man;
Could I have found a nobler messenger,
I would have spar'd myself th' ungrateful task
Of this day's embassy, for much I fear
My news will want a welcome.

Horatius. Mighty king!
Forgive an old man's warmth——They have not sure

Made choice of other combatants!—My sons,
Must they not fight for Rome?

Tullus. Too sure they must.

Horatius. Then I am blest!

Tullus. But that they must engage
Will hurt thee most, when thou shalt know with
whom.

Horatius. I care not whom.

Tullus. Suppose your nearest friends,
The Curiatii, were the Alban choice,
Could you bear that? Could you, young man, support
A conflict there?

Pub. I could perform my duty,
Great sir, though even a brother should oppose me.

Tullus. Thou art a Roman! Let thy king embrace
thee.

Horatius. And let thy father catch thee from his
arms.

Tullus. [*To Publius.*] Know then, that trial must
be thine. The Albans
With envy saw one family produce
Three chiefs, to whom their country dared entrust
The Roman cause, and scorn'd to be outdone.

Horatia. Then I am lost indeed; was it for this,
For this, I pray'd! [*Swoons.*]

Pub. My sister!

Valeria. My Horatia! *Oh, support her!*

Horatius. Oh, foolish girl, to shame thy father thus!
Here, bear her in.

[*Horatia is carried in, Valerius and Valeria follow.*]

I am concern'd, my sovereign,
That even the meanest part of me should blast
With impious grief a cause of so much glory.
But let the virtue of my boy excuse it.

Tullus. It does most amply. She has cause for
sorrow.

The shock was sudden, and might well alarm
A firmer bosom. "The weak sex demand
"Our pity, not our anger; their soft breasts
"Are nearer touch'd, and more expos'd to sorrows
"Than man's experter sense. Nor let us blame
"That tenderness which smooths our rougher na-
tures,

"And softens all the joys of social life."

We leave her to her tears. For you, young soldier,
You must prepare for combat. Some few hours
Are all that are allow'd you. But I charge you
Try well your heart, and strengthen every thought
Of patriot in you. Think how dreadful 'tis
To plant a dagger in the breast you love;
To spurn the ties of nature, and forget
In one short hour whole years of virtuous friendship.
Think well on that.

Pub. I do, my gracious sovereign;
And think the more I dare subdue affection,
The more my glory.

Tullus. True; but yet consider,
Is it an easy task to change affections?
In the dread onset can your meeting eyes
Forget their usual intercourse, and wear

At once the frown of war, and stern defiance ?
Will not each look recall the fond remembrance
Of childhood past, when the whole open soul
Breath'd cordial love, and plighted many a vow
Of tend'rest import ? Think on that, young soldier,
And tell me if thy breast be still unmov'd ?

Pub. Think not, oh, king, howe'er resolv'd on
combat,

I sit so loosely to the bonds of nature,
As not to feel their force. I feel it strongly.
I love the Curiatii, and would serve them
At life's expence : but here a nobler cause
Demands my sword : for all connections else,
All private duties are subordinate
To what we owe the public. Partial ties
Of son and father, husband, friend or brother,
Owe their enjoyments to the public safety,
And without that were vain.—Nor need we, sir,
Cast off humanity, and to be heroes
Cease to be men. As in our earliest days,
While yet we learn'd the exercise of war,
We strove together, not as enemies,
Yet conscious each of his peculiar worth,
And scorning each to yield ; so will we now
Engage with ardent, not with hostile minds,
Not fir'd with rage, but emulous of fame.

Tullus. Now I dare trust thee ; go and teach thy
brothers

To think like thee, and conquest is your own.
This is true courage, not the brutal force

Of vulgar heroes, but the firm resolve
Of virtue and of reason. He who thinks
Without their aid to shine in deeds of arms,
Builds on a sandy basis his renown;
A dream, a vapour, or an ague fit
May make a coward of him.—Come, Horatius,
Thy other sons shall meet thee at the camp,
For now I do bethink me, 'tis not fit
They should behold their sister thus alarm'd.
Haste, soldier, and detain them. [*To one of the guards.*]

Horatius. Gracious sir,
We'll follow on the instant.

Tullus. Then farewell.
When next we meet, 'tis Rome and liberty!

[*Exit with guards.*]

Horatius. Come, let me arm thee for the glorious
toil.

I have a sword, whose lightning oft has blaz'd
Dreadfully fatal to my country's foes;
Whose temper'd edge has cleft their haughty crests,
And stain'd with life-blood many a reeking plain.
This shalt thou bear; myself will gird it on,
And lead thee forth to death or victory. [*Going.*]
—And yet, my Publius, shall I own my weakness;
Though I detest the cause from whence they spring,
I feel thy sister's sorrows like a father.
She was my soul's delight.

Pub. And may remain so.
This sudden shock has but alarm'd her virtue,
Not quite subdued its force. At least, my father,

Time's lenient hand will teach her to endure
The ills of chance, and reason conquer love.

Horatius. Should we not see her?

Pub. By no means, my lord;
You heard the king's commands about my brothers,
And we have hearts as tender sure as they.
Might I advise, you should confine her closely,
Lest she infect the matrons with her grief,
And bring a stain we should not wish to fix
On the Horatian name.

Horatius. It shall be so.
We'll think no more of her. 'Tis glory calls,
And humbler passions beat alarms in vain. [Exit.

As HORATIUS goes off, HORATIA enters at another Door.

Horatia. Where is my brother?—Oh, my dearest
Publius,
If e'er you lov'd Horatia, ever felt
That tenderness which you have seem'd to feel,
Oh, hear her now!

Pub. What wouldst thou, my Horatia?

Horatia. I know not what I would—I'm on the rack,
Despair and madness tear my lab'ring soul.
—And yet, my brother, sure you might relieve me.

Pub. How! by what means? By Heaven, I'll die
to do it.

Horatia. You might decline the combat.

Pub. Ha!

Horatia. I do not

Expect it from thee. Pr'ythee, look more kindly.

—And yet, is the request so very hard?

I only ask thee not to plunge thy sword

Into the breast thou lov'st, not kill thy friend;

Is that so hard?—I might have said thy brother.

Pub. What canst thou mean? Beware, beware,
Horatia;

Thou know'st I dearly love thee, nay, thou know'st
I love the man with whom I must engage.

Yet hast thou faintly read thy brother's soul,

If thou canst think intreaties have the power,

Though urg'd with all the tenderness of tears,

To shake his settled purpose: they may make

My task more hard, and my soul bleed within me,

But cannot touch my virtue.

Horatia. 'Tis not virtue
Which contradicts our nature, 'tis the rage
Of over-weening pride. Has Rome no champions
She could oppose but you? Are there not thousands
As warm for glory, and as tried in arms,
Who might without a crime aspire to conquest,
Or die with honest fame?

Pub. Away, away!
Talk to thy lover thus. But 'tis not Caius
Thou wouldst have infamous.

Horatia. Oh, kill me not
With such unkind reproaches. Yes, I own
I love him, more——

Pub. Than a chaste Roman maid
Should dare confess.

Horatia. Should dare! What means my brother?
I had my father's sanction on my love,
And duty taught me first to feel its power.
—Should dare confess!—Is that the dreadful crime?
Alas, but spare him, spare thy friend, Horatius,
And I will cast him from my breast for ever.
Will that oblige thee?—"Only let him die
"By other hands, and I will learn to hate him."

Pub. Why wilt thou talk thus madly? Love him
still!

And if we fall the victims of our country,
(Which Heav'n avert!) wed, and enjoy him freely.

Horatia. Oh, never, never. What, my country's
bane!

The murderer of my brothers! may the gods
First "tear me, blast me, scatter me on winds,
"And" pour out each unheard-of vengeance on me!

Pub. Do not torment thyself thus idly—Go,
Compose thyself, and be again my sister.

Re-enter HORATIUS, with the Sword.

Horatius. This sword in Veii's field——What dost
thou here?

Leave him, I charge thee, girl——Come, come, my
Publius,
Let's haste where duty calls.

Horatia. What! to the field?
He must not, shall not go; here will I hang—
Oh, if you have not quite cast off affection!
If you detest not your distracted sister——

Horatius. Shame of thy race, why dost thou hang
upon him ?

Wouldst thou entail eternal infamy
On him, on me, and all ?

Horatia. Indeed I would not,
I know I ask impossibilities ;
Yet pity me, my father !

Pub. Pity thee !
Begone, fond wretch, nor urge my temper thus.
By Heaven, I love thee as a brother ought.
Then hear my last resolve ; if Fate, averse
To Rome and us, determine my destruction,
I charge thee wed thy lover ; he will then
Deserve thee nobly. Or, if kinder gods
Propitious hear the prayers of suppliant Rome,
And he should fall by me, I then expect
No weak upbraidings for a lover's death,
But such returns as shall become thy birth,
A sister's thanks for having sav'd her country. [*Exit.*

Horatia. Yet stay—Yet hear me, Publius—But one
word.

Horatius. Forbear, rash girl, thou'lt tempt thy fa-
ther

To do an outrage might perhaps distract him.

Horatia. Alas, forgive me, sir, I'm very wretched,
Indeed I am—Yet I will strive to stop
This swelling grief, and bear it like your daughter.
Do but forgive me, sir.

Horatius. I do, I do——
Go in, my child, the gods may find a way

To make thee happy yet. But on thy duty,
Whate'er reports may reach, or fears alarm thee,
I charge thee come not to the field.

Horatia. I will not,
If you command it, sir. But will you then,
As far as cruel honour may permit,
Remember that your poor Horatia's life
Hangs on this dreadful contest?

Horatius. "Lead her in." [Exit Horatia.
[Looking after her.] Spite of my boasted strength, her
griefs unman me.

—But let her from my thoughts! The patriot's breast
No hopes, no fears, but for his country knows,
And in her danger loses private woes. [Exit.

ACT III. SCENE I.

Continues. VALERIUS and VALERIA meeting.

Valerius.

Now, my Valeria, where's the charming she
That calls me to her? with a lover's haste
I fly to execute the dear command.

Valeria. 'Tis not the lover, but the friend she wants,
If thou dar'st own that name.

Valerius. The friend, my sister!
There's more than friendship in a lover's breast,
More warm, more tender is the flame he feels—

Valeria. Alas! these raptures suit not her distress:

She seeks th' indulgent friend, whose sober sense,
Free from the mists of passion, might direct
Her jarring thoughts, and plead her doubtful cause.

Valerius. Am I that friend? Oh, did she turn her
thought
On me for that kind office?

Valeria. Yes, Valerius.
She chose you out to be her advocate
To Curiatius; 'tis the only hope
She now dares cherish; her relentless brother
With scorn rejects her tears, her father flies her,
And only you remain to sooth her cares,
And save her ere she sinks.

Valerius. Her advocate
To Curiatius!

Valeria. 'Tis to him she sends you,
To urge her suit, and win him from the field.
But come, her sorrows will more strongly plead
Than all my grief can utter.

Valerius. To my rival!
To Curiatius plead her cause, and teach
My tongue a lesson which my heart abhors!
Impossible! Valeria, pr'ythee say
Thou saw'st me not; the business of the camp
Confin'd me there. Farewell. [Going.

Valeria. What means my brother?
You cannot leave her now; for shame, turn back;
Is this the virtue of a Roman youth?
Oh, by these tears! —

Valerius. They flow in vain, Valeria:

Nay, and thou know'st they do. Oh, earth and
heaven!

This combat was the means my happier stars
Found out to save me from the brink of ruin;
And can I plead against it, turn assassin
On my own life?

Valeria. Yet thou canst murder her
Thou dost pretend to love; away, deceiver!
I'll seek some worthier messenger to plead
In beauty's cause; but first inform Horatia,
How much Valerius is the friend she thought him.

[*Going.*

Valerius. Oh, heavens! stay, sister; 'tis an arduous
task.

Valeria. I know the task is hard, and thought I
knew
Thy virtue too.

Valerius. I must, I will obey thee.
Lead on.—Yet pr'ythee, for a moment leave me,
'Till I can recollect my scatter'd thoughts,
And dare to be unhappy.

Valeria. My Valerius!
I fly to tell her you but wait her pleasure. [Exit.

Valerius. Yes, I will undertake this hateful office;
It never can succeed.—Yet at this instant
It may be dangerous, while the people melt
With fond compassion.—No, it cannot be;
His resolution's fix'd, and virtuous pride
Forbids an alteration. To attempt it
Makes her my friend, and may afford hereafter

A thousand tender hours to move my suit.

That hope determines all.

[Exit.]

SCENE II.

Another Apartment. Enter HORATIA and VALERIA.

HORATIA with a Scarf in her Hand.

Horatia. Where is thy brother? Wherefore stays
he thus?

Did you conjure him? did he say he'd come?

I have no brothers now, and fly to him

As my last refuge. Did he seem averse

To thy entreaties? Are all brothers so?

“Alas, thou told'st me he spake kindly to thee!

“'Tis me, 'tis me he shuns; I am the wretch

“Whom virtue dares not make acquaintance with.

“Yet fly to him again, entreat him hither,

“Tell him for thy sake to have pity on me.

“Thou art no enemy to Rome, thou hast

“No Alban husband to claim half thy tears,

“And make humanity a crime.”

Valeria. Dear maid,

Restrain your sorrows; I've already told you

My brother will with transport execute

Whatever you command.

Horatia. Oh! wherefore then

Is he away? Each moment now is precious;

If lost, 'tis lost for ever, and if gain'd,

Long scenes of lasting peace, and smiling years
Of happiness unhop'd for wait upon it.

Valeria. I will again go seek him ; pray, be calm ;
Success is thine if it depends on him. [Exit.

Horatia. Success ! alas, perhaps even now too late
I labour to preserve him ; the dread arm
Of vengeance is already stretch'd against him,
And he must fall. Yet let me strive to save him.
Yes, thou dear pledge, design'd for happier hours,
[To the scarf.

The gift of nuptial love, thou shalt at least
Essay thy power.

Oft as I fram'd thy web,
He sate beside me, and would say in sport,
This present, which thy love designs for me,
Shall be the future bond of peace betwixt us :
By this we'll swear a lasting love, by this,
Through the sweet round of all our days to come,
Ask, what thou wilt, and Curiatius grants it.
O I shall try thee nearly now, dear youth ;
Glory and I are rivals for thy heart,
And one must conquer.

Enter VALERIUS and VALERIA.

Valerius. Save you, gracious lady ;
On the first message which my sister sent me
I had been here, but was oblig'd by office,
Ere to their champions each resign'd her charge,
To ratify the league 'twixt Rome and Alba.

Horatia. Are they engag'd then ?

Valerius. No, not yet engag'd ;
Soft pity for a while suspend the onset ;
The sight of near relations, arm'd in fight
Against each other, touch'd the gazers hearts ;
And senators on each side have propos'd
To change the combatants.

Horatia. My blessings on them !
Think you they will succeed ?

Valerius. The chiefs themselves
Are resolute to fight.

Horatia. Insatiate virtue !
I must not to the field ; I am confin'd
A prisoner here ; or sure these tears would move
Their flinty breasts.—Is Curiatius too
Resolv'd on death ?—O, sir, forgive a maid,
Who dares in spite of modesty confess
Too soft a passion. Will you pardon me,
If I entreat you to the field again,
An humble suitor from the veriest wretch
That ever knew distress.

Valerius. Dear lady, speak !
What would you I should do ?

Horatia. O bear this to him.

Valerius. To whom ?

Horatia. To Curiatius bear this scarf :
And tell him, if he ever truly lov'd ;
If all the vows he breath'd were not false lures
To catch th' unwary mind—and sure they were not !
O tell him how he may with honour cease
To urge his cruel right ; the senators

Of Rome and Alba will approve such mildness.
Tell him his wife, if he will own that name,
Intreats him from the field ; his lost Horatia
Begs on her trembling knees he would not tempt
A certain fate, and murder her he loves.
Tell him, if he consents, she fondly swears,
By every god the varying world adores,
“ By this dear pledge of vow’d affection, swears,”
To know no brothers and no sire but him ;
With him, if honour’s harsh commands require it,
She’ll wander forth, and seek some distant home,
Nor ever think of Rome or Alba more.

“ *Valeria*. Well, well, he will. Do not torment
thyself.

[*Horatia catches hold of the scarf, which she looked
upon attentively while Valeria spoke.*

“ *Horatia*. Look here, Valeria, where my needle’s
art

“ Has drawn a Sabine virgin, drown’d in tears
“ For her lost country, and forsaken friends ;
“ While by her side the youthful ravisher
“ Looks ardent love, and charms her griefs away.
“ I am that maid distress’d, divided so
“ ’Twixt love and duty. But why rave I thus ?
“ Haste haste to Curiatius—and yet stay ;
“ Sure I have something more to say to him :
“ I know not what it was.”

Valerius. Could I, sweet lady,
But paint your grief with half the force I feel it,
I need but tell it him, and he must yield.

Horatia. It may be so. Stay, stay; be sure you
tell him,

If he rejects my suit, no power on earth
Shall force me to his arms. I will devise——
I'll die and be reveng'd!

Valeria. Away, my brother!
But, Oh, for pity, do your office justly!

[*Aside to Valerius.*

Let not your passion blind your reason now;
But urge your cause with ardor.

Valerius. By my soul,
I will, Valeria. Her distress alarms me;
And I have now no interest but hers.

[*Exit.*

“*Valeria.* Come, dearest maid, indulge not thus
your sorrows;

“Hope smiles again, and the sad prospect clears.

“Who knows th' effect your message may produce?

“The milder senators ere this perhaps

“Have mov'd your lover's mind; and if he doubts,

“He's yours.”

Horatia. He's gone—I had a thousand things—
And yet I'm glad he's gone. Think you, Valeria,
Your brother will delay?—They may engage
Before he reaches them.

Valeria. The field's so near,
That a few minutes brings him to the place.

“And 'tis not probable the senators

“So soon should yield a cause of so much justice.

“*Horatia.* Alas! they should have thought on that
before.

“ ’Tis now too late. The lion when he’s rous’d
 “ Must have his prey, whose den we might have
 pass’d

“ In safety while he slept. To draw the sword,
 “ And fire the youthful warrior’s breast to arms
 “ With awful visions of immortal fame,
 “ And then to bid him sheath it, and forget
 “ He ever hop’d for conquest and renown—
 “ Vain, vain attempt !

“ *Valeria.* Yet when that just attempt
 “ Is seconded by love, and beauty’s tears
 “ Lend their soft aid to melt the hero down,
 “ What may we not expect ?

“ *Horatia.* My dear Valeria !
 “ Fain would I hope I had the power to move him.”

Valeria. My dear Horatia, success is yours already.

Horatia. And yet, should I succeed, the hard-gain’d
 strife

May chance to rob me of my future peace.
 He may not always with the eyes of love
 Look on that fondness which has stabb’d his fame.
 He may regret too late the sacrifice
 He made to love, and a fond woman’s weakness ;
 And think the milder joys of social life
 But ill repay him for the mighty loss
 Of patriot-reputation !

Valeria. Pray, forbear ;
 And search not thus into eventful time
 For ills to come. “ This fatal temper, friend,
 “ Alive to feel, and curious to explore

“ Each distant object of refin’d distress,
 “ Shuts out all means of happiness, nor leaves it
 “ In fortune’s power to save you from destruction.”
 Like some distemper’d wretch, your wayward mind
 Rejects all nourishment, or turns to gall
 The very balm that should relieve its anguish.
 He will admire thy love, which could persuade him
 To give up glory for the milder triumph
 Of heart-felt ease and soft humanity.

Horatia. I fain would hope so. Yet we hear not of
 him.

Your brother, much I fear, has su’d in vain.
 Could we not send to urge this slow express?—
 This dread uncertainty! I long to know
 My life or death at once.

“ *Valeria.* The wings of love
 “ Cannot fly faster than my brother’s zeal
 “ Will bear him for your service.

“ *Horatia.* I believe it,
 “ Yet doubt it too. My sickly mind unites
 “ Strange contradictions.”

Valeria. Shall I to the walls?
 I may from thence with ease survey the field,
 And can dispatch a messenger each moment,
 To tell thee all goes well.

Horatia. My best Valeria!
 Fly then; “ I know thy heart is there already.”
 Thou art a Roman maid; and though thy friendship
 Detains thee here with one who scarce deserves
 That sacred name, art anxious for thy country.

But yet for charity think kindly of me ;
For thou shalt find by the event, Valeria,
I am a Roman too, however wretched. [*Exit Valeria.*
Am I a Roman then ? Ye powers ! I dare not
Resolve the fatal question I propose.
If dying would suffice, I were a Roman :
But to stand up against this storm of passions,
Transcends a woman's weakness. Hark ! what noise ?
'Tis news from Curiatius !—Love, I thank thee !

Enter a Servant.

Well, does he yield ? Distract me not with silence.
Say, in one word——

Serv. Your father——

Horatia. What of him ?

Would he not let him yield ? Oh, cruel father !

Serv. Madam, he's here——

Horatia. Who ?

Serv. Borne by his attendants.

Horatia. What mean'st thou ?

Enter HORATIUS, led in by his Servants.

Horatius. Lead me yet a little onward ;
I shall recover straight.

Horatia. My gracious sire !

Horatius. Lend me thy arm, Horatia—So—My
child,

Be not surpris'd ; an old man must expect
These little shocks of nature ; they are hints
To warn us of our end.

Horatia. How are you, sir ?

Horatius. Better, much better. My frail body could
not

Support the swelling tumult of my soul.

Horatia. No accident, I hope, alarm'd you, sir !

My brothers——

Horatius. Here, go to the field again,
You, Cautus and Vindicius, and observe
Each circumstance. I shall be glad to hear
The manner of the fight.

Horatia. Are they engag'd ?

Horatius. They are, Horatia. But first let me thank
thee

For staying from the field. I would have seen
The fight myself ; but this unlucky illness
Has forc'd me to retire. Where is thy friend ?

*Enter a Servant, who gives a paper to HORATIA, and
retires.*

What paper's that ? Why dost thou tremble so ?

Here, let me open it. [*Takes the paper and opens it.*]

From Curiatius !

Horatia. Oh, keep me not in this suspense, my
father !

Relieve me from the rack.

Horatius. He tells thee here,
He dare not do an action that would make him
Unworthy of thy love ; and therefore——

Horatia. Dies !——

Well—I am satisfied.

Horatius. I see by this
Thou hast endeavour'd to persuade thy lover
To quit the combat. Couldst thou think, Horatia,
He'd sacrifice his country to a woman?

Horatia. I know not what I thought. He proves
too plainly,
Whate'er it was, I was deceiv'd in him
Whom I applied to.

Horatius. Do not think so, daughter;
Could he with honour have declin'd the fight,
I should myself have join'd in thy request,
And forc'd him from the field. But think, my child,
Had he consented, and had Alba's cause,
Supported by another arm, been baffled,
What then couldst thou expect? Would he not curse
His foolish love, and hate thee for thy fondness?
Nay, think, perhaps, 'twas artifice in thee
To aggrandize thy race, and lift their fame
Triumphant o'er his ruin and his country's.
Think well on that, and reason must convince thee.

Horatia. [*Wildly.*] Alas! had reason ever yet the
power

To talk down grief, or bid the tortur'd wretch
Not feel his anguish? 'Tis impossible.

Could reason govern, I should now rejoice
They were engag'd, and count the tedious moments
Till conquest smil'd, and Rome again was free.
Could reason govern, I should beg of Heaven
To guide my brother's sword, and plunge it deep
Ev'n in the bosom of the man I love:

I should forget he ever won my soul,
 Forget 'twas your command that bade me love him,
 Nay, fly perhaps to yon detested field,
 And spurn with scorn his mangled body from me.

Horatius. Why wilt thou talk thus? Pry'thee, be
 more calm.

I can forgive thy tears; they flow from nature;
 And could have gladly wish'd the Alban state
 Had found us other enemies to vanquish.
 But Heaven has will'd it, and Heaven's will be
 done!

The glorious expectation of success
 Buys up my soul, nor lets a thought intrude
 To dash my promis'd joys! What steady valour
 Beams from their eyes: just so, if fancy's power
 May form conjecture from his after-age,
 Rome's founder must have look'd, when, warm in
 youth,

And flush'd with future conquest, forth he march'd
 Against proud Acron, with whose bleeding spoils
 He grac'd the altar of Feretrian Jove——
 Methinks I feel recover'd: I might venture
 Forth to the field again. What ho! Volscinius!
 Attend me to the camp.

Horatia. My dearest father,
 Let me entreat you stay; the tumult there
 Will discompose you, and a quick relapse
 May prove most dangerous. I'll restrain my tears,
 If they offend you.

Horatius. Well, I'll be advis'd.

'Twere now too late; ere this they must have conquer'd.

And here's the happy messenger of glory.

Enter VALERIA.

Valeria. All's lost, all's ruin'd! freedom is no more!

Horatius. What dost thou say?

Valeria. That Rome's subdu'd by Alba.

Horatius. It cannot be. Where are my sons? All dead?

Valeria. Publius is still alive—the other two
Have paid the fatal debt they ow'd their country.

Horatius. Publius alive! You must mistake, Valeria.
He knows his duty better.

He must be dead, or Rome victorious.

Valeria. Thousands as well as I beheld the combat.
After his brother's death he stood alone,
And acted wonders against three assailants;
Till forc'd at last to save himself by flight——

Horatius. By flight! And did the soldiers let him
pass?

Oh, I am ill again!—The coward villain!

[Throwing himself into his chair.]

Horatia. Alas, my brothers!

Horatius. Weep not for them, girl.

They've died a death which kings themselves might
envy;

And whilst they liv'd they saw their country free.

Oh, had I perish'd with them!——But for him

Whose impious flight dishonours all his race,

Tears a fond father's heart, and tamely barter
For poor precarious life his country's glory,
Weep, weep for him, and let me join my tears!

Valeria. What could he do, my lord, when three
oppos'd him?

Horatius. Die!

“He might have died. Oh, villain, villain, villain!”
And he shall die; this arm shall sacrifice
The life he dar'd preserve with infamy.

[*Endeavouring to rise.*

What means this weakness? 'Tis untimely now,
When I should punish an ungrateful boy.
Was this his boasted virtue, which could charm
His cheated sovereign, and brought tears of joy
To my old eyes?—So young a hypocrite!
Oh, shame, shame, shame!

Valeria. Have patience, sir; all Rome
Beheld his valour, and approv'd his flight,
Against such opposition.

Horatius. Tell not me!

What's Rome to me? Rome may excuse her traitor;
But I'm the guardian of my house's honour,
And I will punish. Pray ye, lead me forth;
I would have air. But grant me strength, kind gods,
To do this act of justice, and I'll own,

Whate'er 'gainst Rome your awful wills decree,

You still are just and merciful to me. [Exeunt.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

*A Room in HORATIUS's House. Enter HORATIUS,
VALERIA following.*

Horatius.

AWAY, away!—I feel my strength renew'd,
And I will hunt the villain thro' the world:
No deserts shall conceal, nor darkness hide him.
He is well skill'd in flight; but he shall find
'Tis not so easy to elude the vengeance
Of a wrong'd father's arm, as to escape
His adversary's sword.

Valeria. Restrain your rage
But for a moment, sir. When you shall hear
The whole unravell'd, you will find he's innocent.

Horatius. It cannot be.

Valeria. And see, my brother comes.
He may perhaps relate——

Horatius. I will not hear him;
I will not listen to my shame again.

Enter VALERIUS.

Valerius. I come with kind condolance from the
king,
To sooth a father's grief, and to express——

Horatius. I've heard it all; I pray you spare my
blushes.

I want not consolation; 'tis enough
They perish'd for their country. But the third——

Valerius. True, he indeed may well supply your loss,
And calls for all your fondness.

Horatius. All my vengeance :
And he shall have it, sir.

“*Valerius.* What means my lord ?

“Are you alone displeas'd with what he has done ?

“*Horatius.* 'Tis I alone, I find, must punish it.”

Valerius. Vengeance !

“Punish,” my lord ! What fault has he committed ?

Horatius. Why will you double my confusion thus ?
Is flight no fault ?

Valerius. In such a cause as his
'Twas glorious.

Horatius. Glorious ! Oh, rare sophistry !
To find a way through infamy to glory !

Valerius. I scarce can trust my senses—Infamy !
What, was it infamous to save his country ?
Is art a crime ? Is it the name of flight
We can't forgive, though it's ador'd effect
Restor'd us all to freedom, fame, and empire ?

Horatius. What fame, what freedom ? Who has
sav'd his country ?

Valerius. Your son, my lord, has done it.

Horatius. How, when, where ?

Valerius. Is't possible ! Did not you say you knew ?

Horatius. I care not what I knew—Oh, tell me all !
Is Rome still free ?—Has Alba ?—Has my son ?——
Tell me——

Valerius. Your son, my lord, has slain her champions.

Horatius. What, Publius?

Valerius. Ay, Publius.

Horatius. Oh, let me clasp thee to me !
Were there not three remaining ?

Valerius. True, there were ;
But wounded all.

Horatius. Your sister here had told us
That Rome was vanquis'd, that my son was fled——

Valerius. And he did fly ; but 'twas that flight preserv'd us.

All Rome as well as she has been deceiv'd.

Horatius. Let me again embrace thee—Come, relate it.

Did I not say, Valeria, that my boy
Must needs be dead, or Rome victorious ?
I long to hear the manner—Well, Valerius—

Valerius. Your other sons, my lord, had paid the debt
They ow'd to Rome, and he alone remain'd
'Gainst three opponents, whose united strength,
Tho' wounded each, and robb'd of half their force,
Was still too great for his. A while he stood
Their fierce assaults, and then pretended flight
Only to tire his wounded adversaries.

Horatius. Pretended flight, and this succeeded, ha !
Oh, glorious boy !

Valerius. 'Twas better still, my lord ;
For all pursued, but not with equal speed.
Each, eager for the conquest, press'd to reach him ;

Nor did the first, till 'twas too late, perceive
His fainter brothers panting far behind.

Horatius. He took them singly then? An easy conquest ;

'Twas boy's play only.

Valerius. Never did I see

Such universal joy, as when the last
Sunk on the ground beneath Horatius' sword ;
Who seem'd a while to parley as a friend,
And would have given him life, but Caius scorn'd it.

Valeria. Caius ! Oh, poor Horatia !

Horatius. Peace, I charge thee.

Go, dress thy face in smiles, and bid thy friend
Wake to new transports. Let ambition fire her.
What is a lover lost ? There's not a youth
In Rome but will adore her. Kings will seek
For her alliance now, and mightiest chiefs
Be honour'd by her smiles. Will they not, youth ?

[*Exit Valeria.*

Valerius. Most sure, my lord, this day has added
worth

To her whose merit was before unequall'd.

Horatius. How could I doubt his virtue !—Mighty
gods !

This is true glory, to preserve his country,
And bid, by one brave act, the Horatian name
In fame's eternal volumes be enroll'd.

“ Methinks already I behold his triumph.

“ Rome gazes on him like a second founder ;

“ The wond'ring eye of childhood views with awe

“ The new divinity ; and trembling age
“ Crowds eager on to bless him ere it dies !
“ Ere long, perhaps, they will raise altars to him,
“ And even with hymns and sacrifice adore
“ The virtue I suspected ! ”—Gracious Heaven !
Where is he ? Let me fly, and at his feet
Forget the father, and implore a pardon
For such injustice.

Valerius. “ You may soon, my lord,
“ In his embraces lose the fond remembrance
“ Of your mistaken rage.” The king, ere this,
Has from the field dispatch’d him ; “ he but staid
“ Till he could send him home with some slight ho-
nours

“ Of scatter’d wreaths, and grateful songs of praise.
“ For till to-morrow he postpones the pomp
“ Of solemn thanks, and sacrifice to Heaven
“ For liberty restor’d.” But hark ! that shout
Which sounds from far, and seems the mingled voice
Of thousands, speaks him onward on his way.

Horatius. How my heart dances !—Yet I blush to
meet him.

But I will on. Come, come, Horatia ; leave

[*Calling at the door.*]

Thy sorrow far behind, and let us fly
With open arms to greet our common glory. [*Exit.*]

Enter HORATIA and VALERIA.

Horatia. Yes, I will go ; this father’s hard com-
mand

Shall be obey'd ; and I will meet the conqueror,
But not in smiles.

Valerius. Oh, go not, gentle lady !
Might I advise——

Valeria. Your griefs are yet too fresh,
And may offend him. Do not, my Horatia.

Valerius. Indeed 'twere better to avoid his presence ;
It will revive your sorrows, and recall——

Horatia. Sir, when I saw you last I was a woman,
The fool of nature, a fond prey to grief,
Made up of sighs and tears. But now my soul
Disdains the very thought of what I was ;
'Tis grown too callous to be mov'd with toys.
Observe me well ; am I not nobly chang'd ?
From my sad eyes, or heaves my breast one groan ?
No : for I doubt no longer. 'Tis not grief,
'Tis resolution now, and fix'd despair.

Valeria. My dear Horatia, you strike terrors thro'
me ;

What dreadful purpose hast thou form'd ? Oh, speak !

Valerius. “ Talk gently to her.”—Hear me yet,
sweet lady.

You must not go ; whatever you resolve,
There is a sight will pierce you to the soul.

Horatia. What sight ?

Valerius. Alas, I should be glad to hide it ;
But it is——

Horatia. What ?

Valerius. Your brother wears in triumph
The very scarf I bore to Curiatius.

Horatia. [*Wildly.*] Ye gods, I thank ye! 'tis with joy I hear it.

If I should falter now, that sight would rouse
My drooping rage, and swell the tempest louder.
——But soft; they may prevent me; my wild passion
Betrays my purpose.——I'll dissemble with them.
[*She sits down.*]

Valerius. She softens now.

Valeria. How do you, my Horatia?

Horatia. Alas, my friend, 'tis madness which I
utter——

Since you persuade me then, I will not go.
But leave me to myself; I would sit here;
Alone in silent sadness pour my tears,
And meditate on my unheard-of woes.

Valerius. [*To Valeria.*] 'Twere well to humour
this. But may she not,
If left alone, do outrage on herself.

Valeria. I have prevented that; she has not near her
One instrument of death.

Valerius. Retire we then.

“But, Oh, not far, for now I feel my soul

“Still more perplex'd with love. Who knows, Va-
leria,

“But when this storm of grief has blown its fill,

“She may glow calm, and listen to my vows.”

[*Exeunt Valerius and Valeria.*]

After a short Silence, HORATIA rises, and comes forward.

Horatia. Yes, they are gone; and now be firm, my
soul!

This way I can elude their search. The heart,
Which dotes like mine, must break to be at ease.
Just now I thought, had Curiatius liv'd,
I could have driven him from my breast for ever.
But death has cancell'd all my wrongs at once.
——They were not wrongs; 'twas virtue which un-
did us,
And virtue shall unite us in the grave.
I heard them say, as they departed hence,
That they had robb'd me of all means of death.
Vain thought! they knew not half Horatia's purpose.
Be resolute, my brother; let no weak
Unmanly fondness mingle with thy virtue,
And I will touch thee nearly. Oh, come on,
'Tis thou alone canst give Horatia peace. [Exit.

ACT V. SCENE I.

A Street of Rome. Chorus of Youths and Virgins singing and scattering Branches of Oak, Flowers, &c. Then enters HORATIUS, leaning on the Arm of PUBLIUS HORATIUS.

CHORUS.

THUS, for freedom nobly won,
Rome her hasty tribute pours;
And on one victorious son
Half exhausts her blooming stores.

A YOUTH.

Scatter here the laurel crown,
Emblem of immortal praise!
Wondrous youth! to thy renown
Future times shall altars raise.

A VIRGIN.

Scatter here the myrtle wreath,
Though the bloodless victor's due;
Grateful thousands sav'd from death
Shall devote that wreath to you.

A YOUTH.

Scatter here the oaken bough;
Ev'n for one averted fate,
We that civic meed bestow——
He sav'd all who sav'd the state.

CHORUS.

Thus for freedom, &c.

Horatius. Thou dost forgive me then, my dearest
boy,
I cannot tell thee half my ecstasy.
The day which gave thee first to my glad hopes
Was misery to this——I'm mad with transport!
Why are ye silent there? Again renew
Your songs of praise, and in a louder strain
Pour forth your joy, and tell the list'ning spheres
That Rome is freed by my Horatius' hand.

Pub. No more, my friends.—You must permit me, sir,
To contradict you here. Not but my soul,
Like yours, is open to the charms of praise :
There is no joy beyond it, when the mind
Of him who hears it can with honest pride
Confess it just, and listen to its music.
But now the toils I have sustain'd require
Their interval of rest, and every sense
Is deaf to pleasure——Let me leave you, friends ;
We're near our home, and would be private now :
To-morrow we'll expect your kind attendance
To share our joys, and waft our thanks to Heaven.

As they are going off, HORATIA rushes in.

Horatia. Where is this mighty chief ?

Horatius. My daughter's voice !

I bade her come ; she has forgot her sorrows,
And is again my child.

Horatia. Is this the hero
That tramples nature's ties, and nobly soars
Above the dictates of humanity ?
Let me observe him well.

Pub. What means my sister ?

Horatia. Thy sister ! I disclaim the impious title ;
Base and inhuman ! Give me back my husband,
My life, my soul, my murder'd Curiatius !

Pub. He perish'd for his country.

Horatia. Gracious gods !
Was't not enough that thou hadst murder'd him,

But thou must triumph in thy guilt, and wear
His bleeding spoils ?—Oh, let me tear them from thee,
Drink the dear drops that issu'd from his wounds,
More dear to me than the whole tide that swells
With impious pride a hostile brother's heart.

Horatius. Am I awake, or is it all illusion !
Was it for this thou cam'st ?

Pub. Horatia, hear me,
Yet I am calm, and can forgive thy folly ;
Would I could call it by no harsher name.
But do not tempt me farther. Go, my sister,
Go hide thee from the world, nor let a Roman
Know with what insolence thou dar'st avow
Thy infamy, or what is more, my shame,
How tamely I forgave it.—Go, Horatia.

Horatia. I will not go.—What, have I touch'd thee,
then ?

And canst thou feel ?—Oh, think not thou shalt lose
Thy share of anguish. I'll pursue thee still,
“ Urge thee all day with thy unnatural crimes,
“ Tear, harrow up thy breast ; and then at night”
I'll be the fury that shall haunt thy dreams ;
Wake thee with shrieks, and place before thy sight
Thy mangled friends in all their pomp of horror.

Pub. Away with her ! 'tis womanish complaining.
Think'st thou such trifles can alarm the man
Whose noblest passion is his country's love ?
“ —Let it be thine, and learn to bear affliction.”

Horatia. Curse on my country's love, the trick ye
teach us

To make us slaves beneath the mask of virtue ;
To rob us of each soft endearing sense,
And violate the first great law within us.
I scorn the impious passion.

Pub. Have a care ;
Thou'st touch'd a string which may awake my ven-
geance.

Horatia. [*Aside.*] Then it shall "do it."

Pub. Oh, if thou dar'st prophane
That sacred tie which winds about my heart,
By Heaven I swear, by the great gods who rule
The fate of empires, 'tis not this fond weakness
Which hangs upon me, and retards my justice,
Nor even thy sex, which shall protect thee from me.

[*Clapping his hand on his sword.*]

Horatius. Drag her away—thou'lt make me curse
thee, girl——

Indeed she's mad. [To Publius.]

Horatia. Stand off, I am not mad——
Nay, draw thy sword ; I do defy thee, murderer,
Barbarian, Roman !——Mad ! The name of Rome
Makes madmen of you all ; my curses on it.
"I do detest its impious policy."

Rise, rise, ye states (Oh, that my voice could fire
Your tardy wrath !) confound its selfish greatness,
Rase its proud walls, and lay its towers in ashes !

Pub. I'll bear no more—— [*Drawing his sword.*]

Horatius. Distraction !—Force her off——

Horatia. [*Struggling.*] Could I but prove the Helen
to destroy

This curs'd unsocial state, I'd die with transport :
Gaze on the spreading fires—'till the last pile
Sunk in the blaze—then mingle with its ruins.

Pub. Thou shalt not live to that. [*Exit after her.*
Thus perish all the enemies of Rome. [*Without.*

Re-enter VALERIUS.

Valerius. Oh, horror! horror! execrable act;
If there be law in Rome; if there be justice,
By Rome, and all its gods, thou shalt not 'scape. [*Exit.*

Re-enter PUBLIUS, followed by HORATIA wounded.

Horatia. Now thou'st indeed been kind, and I for-
give you
The death of Curiatius; this last blow
Has cancell'd all, and thou'rt again my brother.

Horatius. Heavens! what a sight!
A daughter bleeding by a brother's hand!
My child! my child!

Horatia. What means this tenderness? I thought
to see you
Inflam'd with rage against a worthless wretch
Who has dishonour'd your illustrious race,
And stain'd its brightest fame: in pity look not
Thus kindly on me, for I have injur'd you.

Horatius. Thou hast not, girl;
I said 'twas madness, but he would not hear me.

Horatia. Oh, wrong him not; his act was noble
justice,
I forc'd him to the deed; for know, my father,



THE ROMAN FATHER

*Horatia. Oh let me hasten to those happier climes
Where unmolested we may share our joys*
Act IV.

Tresham del.

A. Smith sculp.

London. Printed for J. Bell British Library, Strand, Oct. 20 1792.

It was not madness, but the firm result
Of settled reason, and deliberate thought.
I was resolv'd on death, and witness, Heaven,
I'd not have died by any hand but his,
For the whole round of fame his worth shall boast
Through future ages.

Horatius. What hast thou said? Wert thou so bent
On death?

Was all thy rage dissembled?

Horatia. Alas, my father!

All but my love was false; what that inspir'd
I utter'd freely.

But for the rest, the curses which I pour'd
On heaven-defended Rome, were merely lures
To tempt his rage, and perfect my destruction.
Heaven! with what transport I beheld him mov'd!
How my heart leap'd to meet the welcome point,
Stab'd with the life-blood of my Curiatius,
Cementing thus our union ev'n in death.

Father. My sister live! I charge thee live, Horatia!
Oh, thou hast planted daggers here.

Horatia. My brother!

Can you forgive me now? then I am happy.

I do! that hope for this! Ye gentle ghosts
That rove Elysium, hear the sacred sound!

My father and my brother both forgive me!
I have again their sanction on my love.

Oh, let me hasten to those happier climes,

Where, unmolested, we may share our joys,

Nor Rome, nor Alba, shall disturb us more. [*Exit.*]

THE ROMAN FATHER

He is the father of the church, the father of the people, the father of the world.

It was not madness, but the firm result
Of settled reason, and deliberate thought.
I was resolv'd on death, and witness, Heaven,
I'd not have died by any hand but his,
For the whole round of fame his worth shall boast
Through future ages.

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Heaven! with what transport I beheld him mov'd!
How my heart leap'd to meet the welcome point,
Stain'd with the life-blood of my Curiatius,
Cementing thus our union ev'n in death.

Pub. My sister live! I charge thee live, Horatia!
Oh, thou hast planted daggers here.

Horatia. My brother!

Can you forgive me too! then I am happy.
I dar'd not hope for that? Ye gentle ghosts
That rove Elysium, hear the sacred sound!
My father and my brother both forgive me!
I have again their sanction on my love.

Oh, let me hasten to those happier climes,
Where, unmolested, we may share our joys,
Nor Rome, nor Alba, shall disturb us more. [*Dies.*

Horatius. 'Tis gone, the prop, the comfort of my age.

Let me reflect; this morn I had three children,
No happier father hail'd the sun's uprising:
Now, I have none, for, Publius, thou must die:
Blood calls for blood—to expiate one parricide,
Justice demands another—Art thou ready?

Pub. Strike! 'tis the consummation of my wishes
To die, and by your hand.

Horatius. Oh, blind old man!
Wouldst thou lift up thy sacrilegious hand
Against the chief, the god that sav'd thy country?
There's something in that face that awes my soul,
Like a divinity. Hence, thou vile weapon,
Disgrace my hand no more.

[*A cry without.*] Justice! Justice!
What noise is that?

Enter VOLSCINIUS.

Vols. All Rome, my lord, has taken the alarm, and
crowds
Of citizens enrag'd, are posting hither,
To call for justice on the head of Publius.

Horatius. Ungrateful men! how dare they? Let
them come.

Enter TULLUS, VALERIUS, and Citizens.

Valerius. See, fellow-citizens, see where she lies,
The bleeding victim.

Tullus. Stop, unmanner'd youth!

Think'st thou we know not wherefore we are here ?
Seest thou yon drooping sire ?

Horatius. Permit them, sir.

Tullus. What would you, Romans ?

Valerius. We are come, dread sir,
In the behalf of murder'd innocence ;
Murder'd by him, the man——

Horatius. Whose conquering arm
Has sav'd you all from ruin. Oh, shame ! shame !
Has Rome no gratitude ? Do ye not blush
To think whom your insatiate rage pursues ?
Down, down, and worship him.

1st Citizen. Does he plead for him ?

2d Citizen. Does he forgive his daughter's death ?

Horatius. He does,
And glories in it, glories in the thought
That there's one Roman left who dares be grateful ;
If you are wrong'd, then what am I ? Must I
Be taught my duty by th' affected tears
Of strangers to my blood ? Had I been wrong'd,
I know a father's right, and had not ask'd
This ready-talking sir to bellow for me,
And mouth my wrongs in Rome.

Valerius. Friends, countrymen, regard not what he
says ;

Stop, stop your ears, nor hear a frantic father
Thus plead against his child.

Horatius. He does belie me.
What child have I ? Alas ! I have but one !
And him you would tear from me.

All Citizens. Hear him ! hear him !

Pub. No ; let me speak. Think'st thou, ungrateful youth,

To hurt my quiet ? I am hurt beyond
Thy power to harm me. Death's extremest tortures
Were happiness to what I feel. Yet know,
My injur'd honour bids me live ; nay, more,
It bids me even descend to plead for life.

But wherefore waste I words ? 'Tis not to him,
But you, my countrymen, to you, I speak ;
He lov'd the maid.

1st Citizen. How ! lov'd her !

Pub. Fondly lov'd her ;

And, under shew of public justice, screens
A private passion, and a mean revenge.

Think you I lov'd her not ? High Heaven's my witness

How tenderly I lov'd her ; and the pangs
I feel this moment, could you see my heart,
'Twould prove too plainly I am still her brother.

1st Citizen. He shall be sav'd.

Valerius has misled us.

All Citizens. Save him ! save him !

Tullus. If yet a doubt remains,
Behold that virtuous father, who could boast
This very morn, a numerous progeny,
The dear supports of his declining age ;
Then read the sad reverse with pitying eyes,
And tell your conscious hearts they fell for your.

Horatius. I am o'erpaid by that, nor claim I ought

On their accounts ; by high Heaven, I swear,
I'd rather see him added to the heap,
Than Rome enslav'd.

1st. Citizen. Oh, excellent Horatius !

All Citizens. Save him ! save him !

Tullus. Then I pronounce him free. And now,
Horatius,
The evening of thy stormy day at last
Shall close in peace. Here, take him to thy breast.

Horatius. My son, my conqueror ! 'twas a fatal
stroke,

But shall not wound our peace. This kind embrace
Shall spread a sweet oblivion o'er our sorrows ;
Or, if in after times, though 'tis not long
That I shall trouble you, some sad remembrance,
Should steal a sigh, and peevish age forget
Its resolution, only boldly say
Thou sav'dst the state, and I'll intreat forgiveness.

*Learn hence, ye Romans, on how sure a base
The patriot builds his happiness ;
Grief may to grief in endless round succeed,
And nature suffer when our children bleed ;
But still superior must that hero prove,
Whose first, best passion, is his country's love.*

[Exeunt omnes.]

EPILOGUE.

*LADIES, by me our courteous author sends
His compliments to all his female friends,
And thanks them from his soul for every bright
Indulgent tear which they have shed to-night.
Sorrow in virtue's cause proclaims a mind,
And gives to beauty graces more refin'd.
Oh, who could bear the loveliest form of art,
A cherub's face, without a feeling heart!
'Tis there alone, whatever charms we boast,
'Though men may flatter, and though men may toast,
'Tis there alone they find the joy sincere,
The wife, the parent, and the friend are there.
All else, the veriest rakes themselves must own,
Are but the paltry play-things of the town;
The painted clouds, which glittering tempt the chase,
Then melt in air, and mock the vain embrace.
Well then; the private virtues, 'tis confess,
Are the soft inmates of the female breast.
But then, they fill so full that crouded space,
That the poor public seldom finds a place.
And I suspect there's many a fair-one here,
Who pour'd her sorrows on Horatia's bier;
That still retains so much of flesh and blood,
She'd fairly hang the brother, if she could.*

*Why, ladies, to be sure, if that be all,
At your tribunal he must stand or fall.
Whate'er his country, or his sire decreed,
You are his judges now, and he must plead.
Like other culprit youths, he wanted grace;
But could have no self-interest in the case.
Had she been wife, or mistress, or a friend,
It might have answer'd some convenient end:
But a mere sister, whom he lov'd—to take
Her life away,—and for his country's sake!
Faith, ladies, you may pardon him; indeed
There's very little fear the crime should spread.
True patriots are but rare among the men,
And really might be useful now and then.
Then do not check, by your disapprobation,
A spirit which might rule the British nation,
And still might rule—would you but set the fashion.*



Whitehead, William,

The Roman father a tragedy

London 1792

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